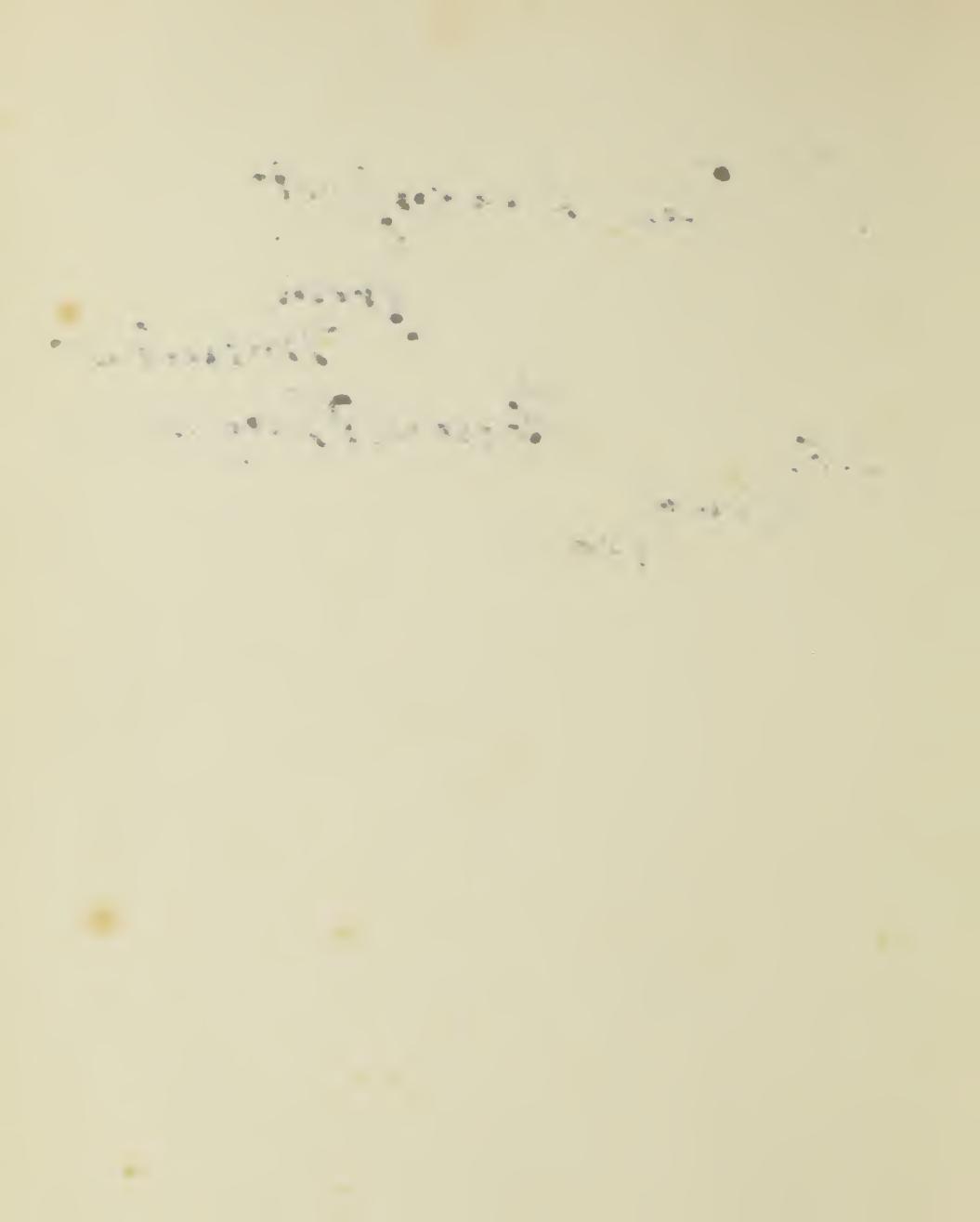


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SONNETS OF EDWARD ROBESON
TAYLOR ON SOME PICTURES
PAINTED BY WILLIAM KEITH

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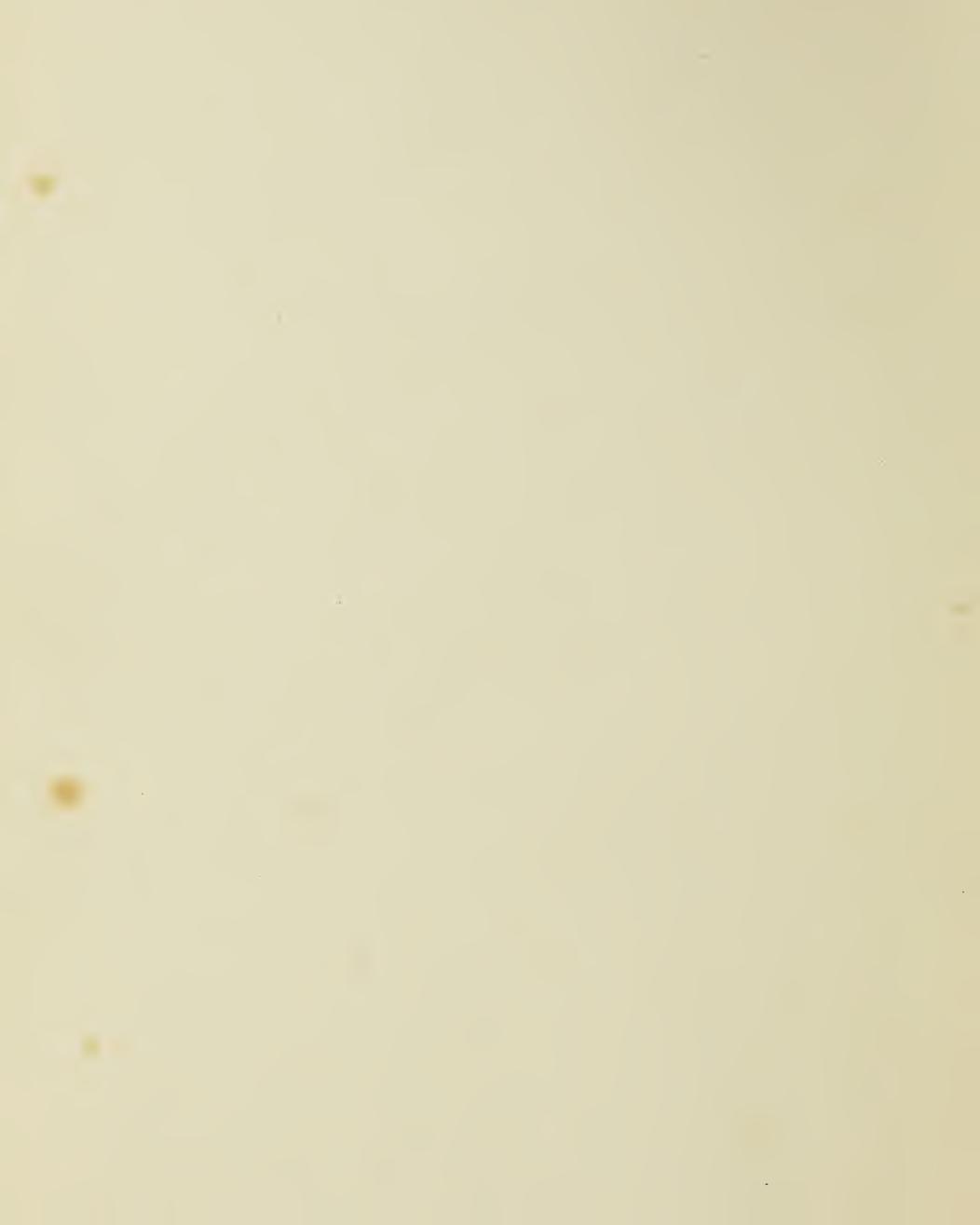
For Miss Liverpool
from
Wm Keith
S. F. Edward Gaynor
April 1900 -





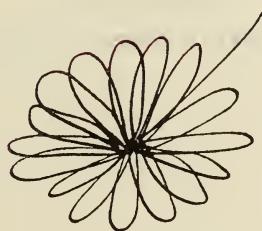
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SONNETS OF EDWARD ROBESON
TAYLOR ON SOME PICTURES
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TO WILLIAM KEITH	5
THE GOLDEN HERITAGE OF THE NATIVE SONS	9
THE JOY OF EARTH	11
APRIL	13
THE QUIET WOOD	15
THE MEADOW	17
THE ENCHANTED WOOD	19
DAWN	21
AT TWILIGHT TIME	23
THE UNCEASING ROUND	25
THE DYING YEAR	27
THE FRUITLESS QUEST	29

TO WILLIAM KEITH

O Master, if such halting verse as mine
Can for a moment stay thy magic brush,
Until mid thankfulness' religious hush
My grateful note shall fall on ear of thine,
I pray thee hearken to this heart-wrought line—
Thou constant one, whose thoughts in beauty's flush
From welling fountains so unceasing gush,
We hail thy Art as born of the divine.
Would that my rhyme could run as does this stream
Which on thy canvas breaks in rapturous song
Where Spring, triumphant, bursts from every clod !
Then would be realized my vain, fond dream :
To sing one bar that might be heard among
The myriad strains that rise from earth to God.

ON SOME PICTURES PAINTED
BY WILLIAM KEITH

THE GOLDEN HERITAGE OF THE NATIVE SONS

Behold this canvas where the artist shows
Our Golden Heritage: The sovereign Sun
In ripened harvest sees his triumph won,
And golden glories deepen to repose,
Save where the laden wain an accent throws
Of voiceful toil; afar the mountains swim;
Great trees ensentinel the valley's rim,
And childhood gambols where the streamlet flows.
O children, nature here has given her best—
So rich, no poet could its wealth proclaim
Though dowered with words of ruby-hearted flame;
Knead with it best of yours; and so possessed,
May you, faced starward, mount to summits where
Your souls shall blossom in celestial air.

THE JOY OF EARTH

Who doubts the earth speaks audibly unto
The heart of everyone that lists to hear,
Setting its beats to music? If to thee not clear
Her ceaseless note that rings beneath the blue;
Or hast thou never been impelled to woo
Her beauty-glowing forms, nor sought her ways,
I pray thee on this breathing picture gaze,
That Art may give thee all thy soul's best due.
For here Earth seems with radiant joy to say:
Behold the children born in love to me—
These lush, deep grasses where the flowerets play
At hide and seek; this wide-embracing tree,
Where birds may live their little, tuneful day,
And golden harvests that are yet to be.

APRIL

Full many a time fair April have I seen
Enwrapped in cloud of every lovely hue,
With tears that fell as soft as morning dew
On bloomy orchard and on fields of green;
And watched her smilingly, her tears between,
The balmy air with sun-born jewels strew,
Till life and joy and song seemed born anew,
To glorify with promise all the scene.
These, and still more, O Master, hast thou caught
Within the meshes of thy subtile art,
That April there, with quickening beauties fraught,
Might stir the languid waters of the heart,
And make forever there all seasons hers
To bid fulfilment crown the laboring years.

THE QUIET WOOD

Come with me into this all-quiet wood,
Where nought of hurry or of noise is known;
Where lulling airs from Heaven's own peace are blown,
To fill the heart with Rest's delicious good.

Here we may lie on leafy couch, and brood,
While sweet Imagination binds her zone
Around our vagrant thoughts, and stirs alone
The silence of this lovely solitude.

Thou precious Art! be always thus, so we
May compass something of thy priceless lore:
Thy deeper truths shall set the spirit free,
When soulless imitation rules no more,

And where, as here, thy joyous liberty
Gives birth to beauty never seen before.

THE MEADOW

Today the soaring mount is not for me
Though it should marshal all its loveliest mass,
Or though across my tempted vision pass
Its utmost witchery of rock and tree;
For this lush meadow holds my heart in fee,
Where clouds lie sleeping in its pool's clear glass,
And where in comradeship with flower and grass
No other friend than Reverie shall be.
The Mountain trumpets with imperious voice,
And great Ambition sits enthronèd there
With spoils that blaze in fever-laden air;
But thou, sweet Meadow, bidst the soul rejoice
In love of lowly and familiar things,
And lead'st to peace's cooling, crystal springs.

THE ENCHANTED WOOD

With moss-grown, interlocking arms that wear
A beauty strangely true, these gnarled trees
Rule o'er this weird demesne, where mysteries
Seem lurking nigh in many an eerie lair.
Silence has closed the lips of every air,
Till hushful Rest, as though on drowsy seas,
Floats dreaming, safe from all disease
Of vain ambition or of mad despair.
To some such spot as this lone Dante might
Have brought the travail of his towering soul,
When exile's grief had made it joy to die;
And here Imagination, love-bedight,
Will over us its waves enchanted roll,
As near this naiad-haunted pool we lie.

DAWN

The mild, alluring Night has had her time,
For now the Sun on his resistless way
Beats down with mighty hand her vast array,
And grandly up the heavens begins to climb.
These pulsing clouds announce the King sublime;
Yet not with banner blazed with ruby ray,
But one whose opal lights the dawning day
Till earth and sky in sober splendor swim.
The birds have scarce awaked, yet man is here,
To lay the dewy grass beneath his knife
And bear it off upon the waiting wain.
Thou new-born Day! what grief, what hope, what fear,
Lie coiled within thy breast; what peace, what strife,
And what ambitions that are worse than vain!

AT TWILIGHT TIME

The Sun that raged victorious through the day,
Like conquering monarch scornful of defeat,
Behind the hills in unrestrained retreat
With pauseless haste now speeds upon his way.
He conquers still: these clouds proclaim his sway,
That lace refulgently the lucent blue,
And this lone-wandering moon with crescent new
Begins to glow with his reflected ray.
The grasses tanned by summer's breath, the trees,
The distant crag a battlement that seems,
Lie in the arms of silence and of rest.
The feverous day is done; night's galaxies
Hold yet aloof; in this mid-time what dreams
May hover o'er us that shall make us blest!

THE UNCEASING ROUND

In centre of the canvas see this pine
All stark in death, with arms in vain appeal
For what it nevermore can taste or feel
Of joys of earth or of the heavens divine.
Straight as in life it stands, still bearing sign
Of noble majesty and dauntless will;
While at its base its elder brothers spill
Their ashes where the grasses kiss and twine.
A glorious redwood centuries have blessed
Uptowers, while with bliss of life possessed
The forest sings in grand, harmonious tone.
And careless men pass by—the children they
Of other children death has made his own,
And who like them shall strive and pass away.

THE DYING YEAR

The year is on the edge of death; for see,
These dreary branches have already shed
Such myriad leaves, they lie in mounds of dead
At foot of each sad-hearted parent tree.
Yet, grim and stern as human soul might be,
The scarred, gray sycamores with defiant head
Like warriors stand, while in its shrunken bed
The languid stream flows on resignedly.
Life is aweary and in quiet here
Would rest awhile her fever-haunted brain,
As dreams she of the dear, departing year;
And Melancholy, led by Memory's train,
With softest tread shall gently come anear,
To dew the ground with sacramental tear.

THE FRUITLESS QUEST

Behold: dark, lead-like clouds made beautiful
With myriad forms of fantasy, where light
Breaks through their lowermost edge with forceful might,
As if in challenge of their right to rule;
Two birds that fly above a sleeping pool
In which a woman peers with aching sight,
Where tree and grass, in mystic garment dight,
Rest in the silence of a dreamful lull.

O Woman! tell me what thou findest here
In light and dark, in water, bird and tree,
In all these grasses and their mystery.

O Man! I am as thou: for could I peer
Till Time made peace with Death, as now I do,
No ray would show me the unraveling clew.

❖❖TWO HUNDRED COPIES OF THESE SONNETS
WERE PRINTED IN SAN FRANCISCO AT THE
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